है तो वहां तापमान की ज्यादा कमी नहीं होती इसलिए फिर जुड़ जाता है। लेकिन कुछेक इलाके ऐसे हैं जहां तापमान की कमी साढ़े चार डिग्री सैल्सियस तक हो गई है। इसलिए वहां यह टुकड़ा टूटता है, बर्फ पिघलती रहती है। ये जो तेज हवाएं चलती हैं उससे वह घूमता-फिरता रहता है वहां से खिसककर आगे नहीं आता है। लेकिन अगर कभी प्राकृतिक घटनाएं हो जाएं और वह उस स्थान से हटकर आगे की तरफ आने लगे तो निश्चय ही काफी संकट पैदा हो सकते हैं। लेकिन काफी वर्षों से देखा जा रहा है कि जब ये टूटते हैं तो टूटने के बाद किसी को खतरा पहुंचाने की तरफ नहीं बढ़ते।

Retrenchment of SAIL employees

*283. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the number of employees of SAIL retired under Voluntary Retirement Scheme during the last three years; and

(b) the amount, the undertaking is expected to pay upto 31st March, 2003, as retirement benefits to persons going for retirement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The number of employees of the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) who have retired under Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) during the last three years is as follows:

Year*	Number of Employees
1998	5975
1999	13617
2001	6510
TOTAL	26102

*The year 2000 had no VRS in operation.

(b) The VRS 1998 and 1999 were on deferred payment basis. For the VRS for 2001 and 2002, SAIL expects to pay Rs 1000 crores upto 31/03/2003.

SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Sir, keeping in view the state of affairs of the public sector undertakings in the country, the Voluntary Retirement Scheme will, no doubt, bring some relief to the Steel Authority of India (SAIL). The number of excess employees can be reduced through this employees' beneficiary scheme. Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister — when the SAIL is already a loss-making company, how will it be ensured that sincere and hard working employees do not leave this undertaking? I would also like to know whether the SAIL will ensure that its efficiency does not suffer as a result of the VRS.

SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY: Sir, in our country, traditionally, the public sector undertakings have been serving the purpose of employment generation. But, at this moment, you know what the national and international scenario are; surplus manpower is killing the profitability and competitiveness of our steel plants. The SAIL has been suffering in this regard. That is why it is taking all possible steps to rightsize its manpower so as to make it more competitive and profitable. It is for this purpose that VRS has been evolved. It is beneficial for the employees. But the right to grant voluntary retirement rests with the management. Although it is voluntary in nature, it is for the management to see whether it is necessary to give voluntary retirement and relieve an employee. If the management thinks that an employee is required in a steel plant, it may not allow the employee to go on voluntary retirement. It is not compulsory on the part of the management to agree to employees' request for voluntary retirement.

SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Sir, so many employees have accepted this scheme. Many employees are waiting to get relief and the benefits. Is there any mechanism that has been evolved to give quick relief and benefits to the employees?

SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY: Sir, as I have already said, the manpower in SAIL has become surplus mainly because of changes in technology, high skill requirement, skill obsolescence, process improvement, competitive requirements, work flexibility and low turnover. This is the main reason why VRS has been introduced in SAIL, and it is working properly. It started in 1998-99; and for two years, that is, in 1998-99 and 1999-2000, it was a different scheme. Now, another scheme has been introduced since 2001-2002. The new scheme has already been introduced and it is helping the employees.

SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Sir, the hon. Minister has stated in his reply that 26,122 workers have taken VRS. The SAIL has to pay around Rs. 1000 crores towards their dues. If SAIL has paid this amount of Rs. 1000 crores, I want to know the benefits that it has derived. How much money SAIL has saved by giving VRS to these employees? The second part of my question is this. The reforms started in the year 1991. Everybody has been saying that they have surplus manpower and that rightsizing of manpower is required. But, from 1991 to 2002, thousands of workers, both executives and non-executives, have been appointed in SAIL, and some of them have been appointed without any interviews. If it is so, what is the number of workers that have been appointed from 1991 to 2002?

SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY: Sir, VRS has been introduced. SAIL has the objective of rightsizing its manpower. But it is mainly because of the mechanisation activities that are going on, and the modernisation activities that are going on in SAIL. So, for meeting the requirements of their steel plants, the SAIL is having its own recruitment programme, So, recruitment has been going on. But it is being done on a very limited scale. Whenever it is necessary, from the point of view of technical upgradation, etc., they are doing recruitment; but it is not being done, in a general sense. After modernisation, if the manpower is surplus in a certain department or in a unit, they are allowed to take voluntary retirement. If some new technical persons are needed, then the management recruits those people through a proper recruitment process. Sir, at the moment, I don't have the figures relating to new recruitment. If the hon. Member is so interested, I can give it to him subsequently.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Sir, my question is very simple. I want to know whether the voluntary retirement scheme is being introduced or is being vigorously pursued in the SAIL, by spending thousands of crores of rupees to facilitate the self-out of the SAIL, to reduce the liability of the promoter who will be taking over the SAIL in the days to come; or, for some other purpose. Would the hon. Minister clarify it?

SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY: Sir, I have already explained that the voluntary retirement scheme was introduced to reduce or rightsize the manpower. One of the factors responsible for the SAIL incurring loss was because its manpower was much more, in comparison to other steel plants in the world. At the moment, we are competing with different steel plants in the world market. Our labour cost is about 21 per cent compared to other new steel plants whose

labour cost is 2—4 per cent. It indicates that our labour cost is much more, compared to other steel plants. Therefore, in order to rightsize the manpower, the Voluntary Retirement Scheme was introduced. Initially, in 1998-1999 and in 1999-2000, this scheme was introduced, on deferred payment basis. Under that scheme, the SAIL had not incurred any cash flow because the employees were paid every month, on deferred payment basis. But, after that, in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001, a new scheme, as per the DPE guidelines, was introduced. Under that scheme, the Government is giving guarantee a loan, to the extent of Rs. 1,500 crores, and the Government is also allowing an interest subsidy of 50 per cent. That is why the SAIL has availed of this loan and is offering voluntary retirement to its employees. Sir, by 2003, the expected expenditure on this would be about Rs. 1,000 crores.

श्री गांधी आज़ाद: महोदय, मंत्री जी ने अपने उत्तर में 26,102 कर्मचारियों को स्वैच्छिक सेवा निवृत्ति हेतु 31.3.2003 तक एक हजार करोड़ रुपया भुगतान करने की आशा की है। मैं मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि जब स्वैच्छिक सेवा निवृत्ति के लिए एक हजार करोड़ रुपए का भुगतान किया जाएगा तो क्या जो सेल चल रहा है, उसकी चल पूंजी प्रभावित होगी या नहीं? अगर उसकी चल पूंजी प्रभावित होगी तो उसको प्रभावहीन करने के लिए सरकार ने क्या उपाय किए हैं?

श्री बृज किशोर त्रिपाठी: मान्यवर सदस्य ने जो कहा है, तो सेल की प्राफिटेबिलिटी और उसको ज्यादा कंपटीटिव बनाने के लिए वीआरएस स्कीम इंट्रोड्यूस की गयी है। सरकार ने इसको एप्रूव किया है, कैबिनेट ने एप्रूव किया है। जो बिजिनेस रीस्ट्रक्चरिंग की योजना है, जो फाइनेंस रीस्ट्रक्चरिंग योजना है, इसके अंतर्गत इस योजना को कर रहे हैं। वीआरएस स्कीम इसके अंतर्गत है, बिजिनेस रीस्ट्रक्चरिंग योजना के अंतर्गत है। इसमें सेल को ज्यादा फायदा होगा, ज्यादा लाभ मिलेगा। इसीलिए यह वालंटरी रिटायरमेंट स्कीम सेल में इंट्रोड्यूस की गयी है।

*284. [The Question Shri S. Ramachandran Pillai was absent for answer *vide* page 26 infra]

*285. [The Question Dr. Arun Kumar Sarma was absent for answer *vide* page 27 infra]

Flood damage in Kerala

*286. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have extended special assistance towards flood damage caused due to South-West Monsoon, set in Kerala on 25th May, 2001;